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## SENATE PASSES BAUCUS-HATCH BILL BOOSTING ACCESS TO FLU VACCINES

Bill Heads to President's Desk for Signature Into Law

WASHINGTON – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Ranking Member Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) today applauded the Senate's passage of a bill that updates a key program to ensure the latest flu vaccine is available for future flu seasons. The bill covers advanced vaccines under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program (VICP), which assesses a small, per-dose excise tax and uses those funds to compensate individuals with certain vaccine-related injuries. It also helps ensure the most current vaccines are on the market and readily available to consumers.

"This common-sense measure will guarantee the latest, most effective flu vaccine is on the market and available to fend off viruses and keep people healthy during the next flu season," Senator Baucus said. "I'm pleased we could come together across party lines to get this done."

"As the saying goes, 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,'" said Hatch. "With this bill, patients will have access to the most up-to-date vaccines to help guard themselves from the upcoming flu season. It's a common-sense measure that protects the public's health without raising taxes and I'm glad my colleagues recognized this importance of this bill."

The bill covers all FDA-approved flu vaccines under the VICP. These new treatments provide broader protection against the flu by combatting more strains of the influenza virus. Unless Congress adds new, advanced vaccines to the VICP list, they are unlikely to become publicly available.

The bill, which the Senate passed last night, was also passed by the House on Tuesday. Senators Baucus and Hatch introduced an identical bill earlier this year. The bill now goes to the White House for the President's signature.